

## Milan Bridge Task Force Minutes

November 17, 2015

10:30 am – 12:30 pm

### Facilitator's (Phil) Notes –Productive Meeting!

The taskforce is on schedule to focus on more specific recommendations around our top concerns identified. The taskforce was able to weigh the concerns and risks associated with the replacement and rehabilitation options. From a process perspective, this was a large accomplishment that will be valuable moving forward.

Thanks again for the patience of stakeholders that have been analyzing this project for quite some time. Everyone has come along and learned some new ideas at an efficient pace. At the next meeting, we will continue to focus on recommendations for MnDOT through discussions and a couple group exercises. It was a constructive working with everyone yesterday and I am excited to be part of the discussions.

With Respect,

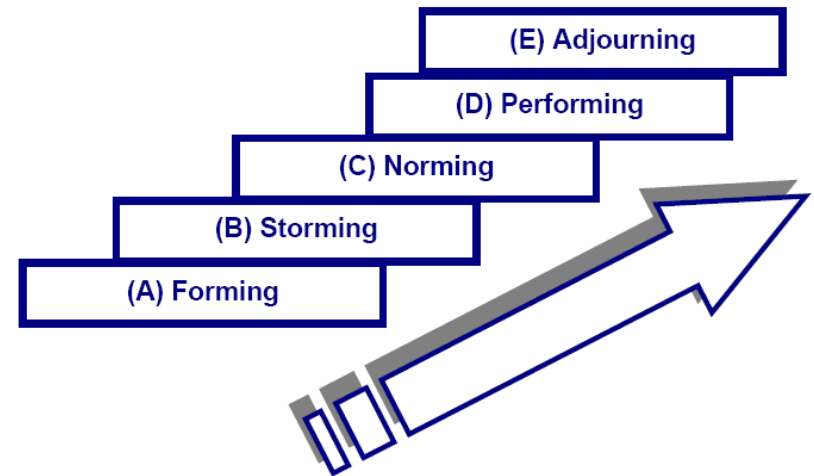
Phil

763-270-3461

### Meeting Minutes

Phil Barnes re-introduced himself as a professional facilitator and his role as an independent “neutral” in the process. Phil then reviewed several concepts including:

- **Taskforce Ground Rules**
- **Vision Statement for the Milan Bridge Project:** *The Milan Bridge Project is a success because it enhances public safety, improves recreational opportunities, and addresses historical and environmental concerns, while supporting the local economy through developing the structure in a timely and collaborative manner that meets the transportation needs of the local community while efficiently using public dollars.*



Phil then reviewed previous meetings and progress, and including discussions previously about:

- **Safety of Vehicles**
- **Pedestrians**
- **Local Economics**
- **Points of disagreement (Losing Money is a High Level Concern for MnDOT, but not Residents)**

Phil asked that we continue to try and continue to “put yourself in others shoes” as we progress. He then asked everyone to state their name and where they work. Participants included:

- **Representatives**
- **Chippewa Historical Society**
- **DNR**
- **Lac Qui Parle Superintendent**
- **Cultural Resources Department and liaison to Federal Highways**
- **MnDOT Cultural Resources Department**
- **Minnesota Historical Preservation Office**
- **Various residents**
- **Laq Qui Parle Commissioner and RDC member**
- **Other RDC**
- **Chippewa Engineer**

Some utilized the time to reinforce frustrations with previous process, and suggested the project felt like it was being forced upon them.

Phil then talked about things that came up in our workshop #2 “open agenda” time. Phil suggested that we continue to *not* focus on the past because it cannot be changed, but we can change the future. Phil mentioned an “ideal” government decision making process where all stakeholders are able to influence public decisions. Phil compared this to a “private sector” organization where a “boss” has the final decision making ability. Phil suggested that many stakeholders have influence in government and public decisions. Some stakeholders disagreed, and suggested that there is a “boss” in government and that it usually works “top down”. Phil suggested that he was trying to create an “ideal” situation where many can influence the decision with the current process. Phil also acknowledged that there are times where the “ideal” does not work and influence can vary among stakeholders.

MnDOT District representation stated that they wanted to hear different perspectives among the scenarios being discussed. She also made it clear that no decisions have been made yet by MnDOT, and that this process will influence the decision. She mentioned 3 major factors that influence decisions at MnDOT including:

- **Public input**
- **Data**
- **Process, policies, rules, laws, etc.**

Phil then started the agenda by discussing the intent of “History laws” and impacts to timeliness of project delivery of a replacement bridge. He explained that they were passed in the 1960s, when at that time, many landmarks were being destroyed. The historical preservation laws were created to help mitigate this problem and require governments to deeply consider historical significance and preservation. He said that all recipients of federal funds are responsible for a 106 “history” process. This process does not require preservation, but can take some time to process and consider historical preservation. A taskforce member made the point that this process was done previously without any local input. Another member suggested that the law can be interpreted differently. Phil agreed that many federal laws leave room for interpretation. Phil summarized that this process will “start over” if we go with a replacement that can trigger concerns, like losing bonding money. Some other “standard” design, environmental, etc. processes would also be “start over” that can take years. Phil said he was mentioning this so we can all be on the same page with expectations.

Phil also suggested that there is no crystal ball and that we will be assessing the future ramifications of recommendation scenarios, while understanding that there will be some level of uncertainty. He ensured everyone that uncertainty is OK about our project, and it indicates that we may need more information. Phil asked that participants follow the ground rules to make discussions respectful. Phil then reminded participants about how we will talk about concerns within each option. **Phil then went through how these concerns will be evaluated by asking 3 main questions:**

- 1. What objective information do we have, and do we need more?**
- 2. How likely is this concern going to become a problem?**
- 3. How impactful will this problem be on our vision of project success**

The following table reflects the concern levels documented for each option and notes from Phil on the discussion:

Area of Concern	Rehab Option	Replacement Option	Facilitator Notes	Preliminary Recommendations for Desired Replacement Option	TEAM NOTES
Pedestrian Safety	High	High	With a wider bridge, speed across the bridge will likely increase that could result in pedestrian safety issues. Likewise the "rehab" option still is a high concern because of the level of "fishing" and recreational activities off and around the bridge. The "big abutments" conceal fisherman, however there is no data on pedestrian problems on the bridge. It was acknowledged that these concerns could be managed with design features, and that it will be a big issue with either option because of all the recreation in the area. This can be potentially better managed with safety upgrades with in the replacement option.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend existing trail to bridge</li> <li>• 6 to 12 foot wide sidewalk</li> <li>• Concrete barrier so that people can't walk across</li> <li>• Evaluate possibility of flashing pedestrian crosswalk</li> <li>• Explore exemption for snowmobiles</li> </ul>	TBD
Recreational Activities - Fishing, Biking and Snowmobile	High	High	The community feels that fishing of the bridge will undoubtedly always happen, and that safety of this recreational activity should be a high design concern in either case. This is a recreational area in general with trails, biking, snowmobiling and fishing. The rehab option would take into account pedestrian safety and context of the recreational area. This can be potentially better managed with the replacement option.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend existing trail to bridge</li> <li>• 6 to 12 foot wide sidewalk</li> <li>• Concrete barrier so that people can't walk across</li> <li>• Evaluate possibility of flashing pedestrian crosswalk</li> <li>• Explore exemption for snowmobiles</li> </ul>	TBD
We lose public support	High	Low	It has been made clear that there would be a high concern from the public and public officials, if the rehab option is chosen. Additional cost can be made up by the longer life of the new structure to create a ROI.	Avoid Rehab Concern - Move forward with the Replacement Option. Show ROI of 25 + years of additional transportation service additional service will create in comparison to additional cost. Additionally, decision will show MnDOT is listening and is collaborative with local perceptions and interests, along with data and process concerns.	TBD
Local Economy - Size of Vehicle Problem	High	Low	Detours can be up to 120 miles because of the large load routes. Width issues with combines, homes, and other items that don't fit. Although data does not exist, truckers testified that "beet trucks" are challenged crossing at the same time.	Avoid Rehab Concern - Move forward with the Replacement Option	TBD
Loss of Historical Significance	Low	Moderate	Concern level of community with losing a historical structure is moderate, and there are some within the community that would like to see some things saved. It was reiterated that replacement is the biggest priority for the residents, and some felt that the concern level should be low. Questions arose around why the bridge is historical and standards that were used. It was explained that it is historical because of its association with the WPA and how the US came out of the depression. It was explained that there is specific methodology that is used when making those decisions, and the scale and size of this project is probably the largest in the state of MN in regards to WPA. The community would like to incorporate some historical aspects in a replacement bridge if not cost prohibitive.	<p>D8 commented that there are some possibilities, but we can't have something very costly. Because this is a low volume, NHS road, MnDOT won't have many options. Money is put toward high volume, NHS roads. Explore Options with Community and restart 106 processes.</p> <p>Consider the following for cost prohibitive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn the old bridge into a fishing pier and move it?</li> <li>• Move the bridge to Chippewa and use it as a walking bridge?</li> <li>• Move the bridge to a different location in the historic district?</li> <li>• Bridge stay where it is and build a new bridge to the south?</li> <li>• Restore the WPS stone work only?</li> </ul>	TBD

Safety Vehicles	Moderate	Low	Safety data was introduced that showed low crash rates in recent history (10 years). Participants argued that its recent data and there should be a focus on the risk of accidents. From a user perspective, it feels dangerous and does not appear to meet modern standards for functionality. The "rehab" option was labeled a "moderate concern" after accounting for present data and potential risks for crashes. It was testified that a fatal crash has happened on the bridge but it was before the data collection efforts. It was also noted that "potential safety risk" has been a reasoning used by MnDOT in the past. Snow and weather is a large problem crossing the entire causeway.	Accept - Low Risk for Replacement Option	TBD
Local Economy - Load Capacity and Closures	Low	Moderate * Directly Tied to Bonding and Project Delivery Delay Concerns	Rehab and reconstruction both take care of current load capacity concerns. However delays caused by standard project delivery processes can create new lower load limits that would create some concern. MnDOT has stated that further load posting is a likely scenario as the project "restarts" the project delivery process for the replacement. Truck users of the bridge have stated that this would be worth the risk in pursuing the replacement option. D8 doesn't have a certain date in mind, but that load restrictions may get tighter for the replacement option. Other maintenance would need to be done as well, etc. In the next 2-5 years it may not close, but after 5 years (miss funding/bonding window) it may need to be closed due to structural issues. There is uncertainty around the exact timeline and MnDOT expressed this as a risk. Residents are willing to accept this risk, rather than not fixing other concerns for good.	Accept. Community has been informed of the potential risks to their quality of life during standard project delivery processes. Make every attempt to get through project delivery process before funds expire in 2018.	Highlighted to denote Risks Acceptable to Residents
Losing Funding (Bonding)	Low	Low * High Concern for MnDOT, 2018 deadline, and its almost 2016	With either option, losing funding is not a concern. MnDOT staff made clear that bonding dollars (2.8 million) available will expire in 2018. Rehab there is less risk for losing funds, but the Rehab option will not meet the vision of success. The reconstruction project would require timeline extension due to required project delivery processes and make losing funding likely; however this is acceptable to participants. Group has a long-term vision for the project and community. MnDOT staff disagrees from a regional perspective, and feels this would be a high concern from their perspective. If replacement is brought forward the section 106 process starts all over. SHPO would work with the Corps and the planning process for D8 would start all over as well. Risk of losing funds is high for MnDOT. Residents are not concerned with the funding.	Accept. Community has been informed of the potential risks to their quality of life during standard project delivery processes. Make every attempt to get through project delivery process before funds expire in 2018.	Highlighted to denote Risks acceptable to Residents

Risks to "Starting Over" Project Delivery Process "Delays"	Low	Moderate  * Also tied to bonding, delay may get larger without funding	Facilitator and MnDOT made it clear that standard project delivery practices could take 3 to 5 years to start construction. It was also mentioned that "starting over" and standard processes enhance the risk of more bridge load postings, losing funding, and potential bridge closures due to structural safety concerns. D8 pointed out that they use salt because of harsh weather conditions and this could accelerate structural deterioration. The community is willing to accept these risks to the replacement option and considers the "rehab" option as the worst case scenario, because nothing will get done for another 50 years. Another farmer added that closing the bridge adds 15-16 miles. He feels that this detour is worth the risk. For the local people who use it daily, it is a daily burden. D8 also clarified that it is "bonding money" that would be lost because there are not many bridges in D8 that makes shifting funds unrealistic. It was made clear that the preliminary estimates were \$3.4 million for rehabilitation, and replacement option is around \$5.9 million.	Accept. Community has been informed of the potential risks to their quality of life during standard project delivery processes. Make every attempt to get through project delivery process before funds expire in 2018.	Highlighted to denote Risks acceptable to Residents
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Meeting Adjourned – 12:30 pm